

**Eyeless, Topless Potatoes.**

We have read this wonderful story in many of our agricultural exchanges, usually without a word of comment. We did not believe a word of it, but the American Farmer tells the story so well and its remarks are so good that we give it place this week.

We like a good story, even when we know it is not true. In fact, many of the best stories are pure fiction, but if well told are entertaining, and that is the main purpose of a story. Naturally, however, we are skeptical and when we read one of these wonder stories in connection with agricultural matters, feel like throwing out a word of caution and labeling the matter, "important if true." This is preliminary to mentioning a story set afloat by the Chicago Evening Post about one Darst, who claims to have discovered a method of raising potatoes that will not only revolutionize the tuber business but make him a veritable Rockefeller in wealth. It is rather against Darst that he once lived in Chicago, but as for several years he has been located at Great Falls, Montana, the improved atmosphere there may have toned down the love of the marvelous liable to be generated in the Windy City. But here is the tale in brief, on which the American Farmer will suspend judgment until it sees some of the potatoes:

Darst declares the secret lies in the composition of a preparation that takes the place of soil. It is upon this mixture that he claims to have secured a patent. He says that a layer of this mixture, three or four inches deep, may be placed in a box, with eyes of potatoes; on this first layer may be placed another layer of the mixture, with potato eyes scattered through it; and so on one layer on top of another, until the box has been filled. Then the mixture may be heated, he declares, and the growth of potatoes will commence and progress rapidly in each of the numerous layers. He claims that all that is necessary is to keep the mixture at a growing temperature and to water it every two weeks, and that within sixty days of the time of planting the eyes there will be a crop of perfect potatoes in each layer of the box, all the tubers being of about the size of a hen's egg. All this, he claims, will result without a single vine or sprout appearing above the surface.

In his experiments Darst has heated the contents of his box by means of a steam coil, but he declares that this is unnecessary, and that the heat of the sun will suffice, if the box be covered with glass. He terms his box an incubator. The one he has used is a small one, but he claims the same results may be secured in a box of any depth, length or width.

He claims he has demonstrated he can produce, in a box fifteen feet deep and covering 43,560 square feet, 30,000 bushels of "new" potatoes every sixty days, and secure six such crops every year. He claims such a box covering one acre, with the required heating apparatus, may be constructed for \$2,500 and that the cost of his compound and the labor required will amount to \$2.00 a ton. He declares that at certain seasons, he can market all the potatoes he can supply in Chicago at 8 cents a pound. If he received only 1 cent a pound, his yield an acre, on an investment of \$2,500, and an expenditure of \$1,800 for labor and materials, would be \$18,000, according to his figures.

Darst declares his potatoes are not only "vineless" or "topless," but that they are also eyeless. He asserts they are as smooth as an apple, having no eye and that he must secure his seed supply from others, not being able to raise by his process. He declares the potatoes are of excellent quality and will keep as well as any.

What can be done in the line of potato farming where prices usually range much lower than those received by Florida growers, in ordinary years, is shown by an article from the Southern Planter. The New York

grower's crop must have been seriously attached by the potato blight from the amount of spraying that was done. This is an extra expense that our farmers have, so far, escaped.

**Spuds Raise the Mortgage.**

When T. E. Martin, a Monroe county, N. Y., farmer, got possessed of his land several years ago it was producing about 60 bushels of potatoes per acre. Other crops were nothing to speak of, but he went to work in a determined way to improve the place. The farm was poorly drained, so, year by year, he has been putting down the drains, until he now has nine miles of them planted. The work was done with care and system, so the benefit from them would be permanent. The depth of the drains varies from four to four and one-half feet, and the distance apart is about fifty feet. The two general outlets are protected by concrete casing, and so grates with iron rods as to exclude any animal that might do injury. A diagram, carefully made shows the exact location of every line of life.

The following record of his potato crops shows what he has done: 1901, 4,570 bushels from eighteen acres, averaging 254 bushels; 1902, 4,715 bushels from seventeen acres, averaging 277 bushels; 1903, 4,718 bushels from eighteen acres, averaging 262 bushels; 1904, 5,100 bushels from eighteen acres, averaging 283 bushels. In 1902 a plot of ten acres averaged 306 2-3 bushels, and he thinks that, were it not for the early frost in the fall of 1904, the entire eighteen acres would have averaged 300 bushels an acre.

The cost of draining (\$2,000), added to other indebtedness on the farm, placed him under an uncomfortable weight of \$4,500 debt. This fact, coming to the knowledge of the neighbors who had been criticising and watching, made them chuckle and say, "I told you so." In four years this debt was paid, and a surplus placed in the bank.

The tile draining merely opened the way for improved farming. Under a three-year rotation—potatoes, wheat and meadow—the land is improved in producing power. All the manure from four horses, two cows, three pigs and the poultry is applied direct to the potato field. Plowing is ten inches deep, and other preparation very thorough. Potatoes are planted in drills thirty-three inches apart, and about thirteen inches apart in the drills, using an automatic planter, which cuts, drops and covers the seed. The potatoes receive from twelve to fifteen cultivations, and about ten applications of Bordeaux, using 178 barrels of fifty gallons each. This keeps the foliage perfectly healthy.

In addition to the stable manure, his potatoes receive 1,000 pounds of a compound of South Carolina rock and high-grade subphosphate of potash an acre. The formula is 8 per cent phosphates and 21 and one-half per cent potash. This is building up the land in potash.

The selection of seed is important. From 800 bushels, he picks out fifty bushels of the most choice, large, smooth, perfect-shaped tubers to plant on the best piece of ground, to grow seed for the next year. A second grade of 250 bushels is selected to plant the main crop. Sir Walter Raleigh's are grown exclusively.

The following from the Michigan Farmer gives the results of cutting to a single eye. There is plenty of confirmatory evidence to be had.

**Do Single Eyes Make Large Potatoes Only?**

I noticed an article in The Farmer-headed Experiments With Seed Potatoes, in which the writer criticises all of us who cut out seed potatoes to one and two eyes, and asks if we do it because our fathers did. I can only answer for one. My father cut a potato into two to four pieces, according to size, and planted one piece in a hill.

Several instances have come under my observation, and every single one

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